

# Thirty-one Years Of Progress

*Bell* *Batchelder*

## 1935 - 1966



Presented by

Warrenton Dune Soil & Water Conservation District Clatsop County, Oregon

In cooperation with

Clatsop County Court . . . State of Oregon . . . Private Landowners and others . . .  
and U.S.D.A. Soil Conservation Service



## FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD:

As chairman of the present board of supervisors of the Warrenton Dune Soil and Water Conservation District, I salute the cooperators, individuals, local, State, and Federal organizations for the 31 years of progress that has been made in stabilizing the Warrenton Dunes and putting a stop to damaging floods in northwestern Clatsop County.

Those of us who were fortunate enough to be here when the CCC boys first began the task of halting the Warrenton Dune erosion have seen a miracle take place before our eyes as once worthless and ravaging sand dunes were changed to rolling mounds of grass and pine.

We have seen beach homes spring up where

once there was no land. We have seen a State Park become a reality in an area that was nothing but sand. We have seen beautiful lakes saved from blowing sand to become an outdoor playground. And we have seen a watershed project halt costly flooding and pour new life into the community.

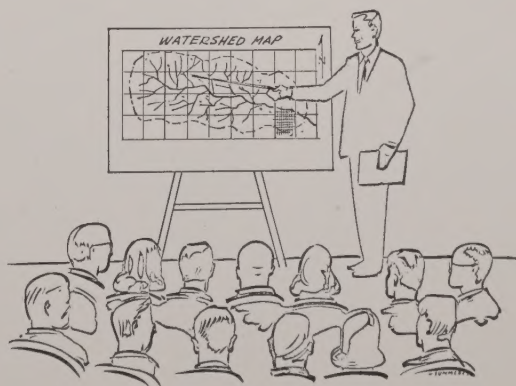
And all this has come about in just little more than a quarter century of cooperative effort by people who recognized a problem and found the means to solve it.

The effort and success behind the story is truly a tribute to the soil and water conservation district movement and a worldwide landmark in land treatment.

Peter Plyter  
Chairman  
Board of Supervisors  
Warrenton Dune Soil and Water  
Conservation District

Looking north toward Columbia River from the Gearhart Hotel in 1966. Vegetative dune stabilization permitted valuable development of eroding and new land.

Looking north toward Columbia River from Gearhart Hotel in 1935. Approximately 18 miles of moving sand.



## HISTORY

The Warrenton Dune Soil and Water Conservation District was created to combat dune erosion in the northwest corner of Clatsop County. Local landowners voted in the district, consisting of 5,800 acres, in 1941.

As a further dune control measure, land use regulations and zoning of the area were voted in in 1948.

In 1956, 8,000 more acres were added to the district. And installed land treatment measures began to show results as the erosion stopped.

Fort Stevens State Park was developed after the sand was stabilized on the west side of Coffenbury Lake. And drainage and flooding problems in the district were attacked with the addition of the 20,000-acre Skipanon River Watershed. To handle this part of the program, a water control district was formed with a 9-man board sub-district to operate it.

Looking back over 31 years of work with the dune problem, community leaders who have



worked with the project from its inception can see the benefits that have been gained by the work.

The tax base has been broadened by the construction of new homes, business establishments, recreational areas, and wildlife improvement. The 31 "Miracle" years have brought: protection of Columbia River shipping lanes; State and county roads and parks; development of Fort Stevens State Park, with access to both fresh and salt water fishing and bathing; a State game preserve with restricted hunting; an opening of the way for recovery of good agricultural land; the restoration of forage and other crops.

Early board of supervisors of Warrenton Dune SWCD: Standing left to right — Jack Wood, Noel B. Rawls, Bryson Lausch, WUC. Sitting left to right — Don Tagg, Charles Johnson (1st district chairman), Peter Plyter (present district chairman), Bob Reed.









## DUNE STABILIZATION

In 1935, the 3,000 acres of sand dunes in the northwest corner of Clatsop County were on the move — covering fertile pastures, filling in lakes, covering forests, and hindering navigation on the Columbia River.

Interested landowners and the Clatsop County Court decided something should be done to stop this erosion and stabilize the land to put it back on a paying basis.

The first work was started in 1935 by the Civilian Conservation Corps, and continued by the Warrenton Dune Soil and Water Conservation District with the help of the Soil Conservation Service. Beachgrass planting was started as the first and most successful method of stilling the shifting sand. Twenty-three miles of picket fences were built to form a protective ridge so the beachgrasses could get a better start.

In the less erosive areas, native grasses and legumes were seeded in the beachgrass, making good food for wildlife, as the beachgrass is non-palatable to livestock.

The final step was the use of woody plants, pine being the best suited. Species from all over the world were tried. The local shore pine proved to be the best all-around one that was used.

Scotch broom and shore pine serve best in supporting roles and were planted to provide a lasting cover after the sand was halted by beachgrass planting. In tree and shrub plantings, survival was very high and growth excellent.

Success achieved with the Warrenton Dunes has attracted attention from countries all over the world. Visitors come to study the systems that were, and are, being used.

Half mile wide area of moving sand with remnants of original dune in center background as it appeared in 1937. Trees in background mark site of present Ft. Stevens State Park.



Same location as below taken in 1957.

Present day view of above with 20-foot shore pine.







1937 view of area west of present site of Ft. Stevens State Park. Sand is encroaching on trees protecting Coffenbury Lake.



Same as above showing stabilized sand dunes and trees planted to protect Coffenbury Lake.





Sunset Beach Road protected by beachgrass planting made in 1936-37.



Sunset Beach Road at present time showing plantings of scotch broom and shore pine.





Sunset Beach Road looking north to Columbia River showing eroded area with old dune remnants in 1937.



Same as above with eroded area stabilized with European beachgrass and shore pine.





Blowing sand caused problems for Gearhart property owners in 1935. Sand piled up to second floor of many residences. Removing sand, sometimes several times a year, proved expensive.

Once near worthless land, with stabilization of the dunes now support modern new homes and large increase in tax revenue.







Old plank road leading to site of present Ft. Stevens State Park beach in 1935. Historic 1906 Peter Iredale wreck in center background. Sand piled up and closed road regularly making continuous and costly maintenance necessary.

Same as above showing first year growth of European beachgrass in 1937-38.







Peter Iredale road 2 years after project was started.

Same as above as it is today with shore pine and scotch broom cover.  
35-foot foredune hides wreck of the Peter Iredale.









## RECREATION

With the dunes stabilized, recreation came into its own in the Warrenton Dune Soil and Water Conservation District.

Fort Stevens State Park was developed offering both salt and fresh water swimming, boating, and fishing on Coffenbury Lake and in the Pacific Ocean. Camping facilities in the park are filled to overflowing during the summer months, and the park plans to add another 2,500-acre recreation and camping area in the near future that will include restricted duck and pheasant hunting.

It is almost a certainty that Coffenbury Lake would have been filled in by blowing sand if the dunes had not been stabilized. Now, it provides a sandy beach and picnic area for visitors to Fort Stevens State Park.



Ft. Stevens State Park recreational facilities being used by the general public today.

1939 view of original location of Ft. Stevens State Park and duck and pheasant hunting areas showing sand encroaching on Coffenbury Lake.

Same as above showing stabilized condition with sandy beach at north end of Coffenbury Lake.







Local landowner stranded in his house as a result of flooding Skipanon River.



Former WUC Bryson Lausch checking flooding conditions of Skipanon River resulting from high tides, clogged channel, and heavy rain storm.





## SKIPANON RIVER WATERSHED

In 1960, the Skipanon River Watershed Project was authorized for construction as a remedy for the drainage and flooding problems in the Warrenton Dune Soil and Waier Conservation District. To follow through on the project, a water control district was formed with a 9-man board sub-district to operate it.

Sponsored by the district, the city of Warrenton, and the Clatsop County Court, the 10,500-acre project received technical and financial assistance from the Soil Conservation Service under Public Law 566.

The watershed contains 1900 acres of farmland subject to frequent flooding each year. Included in this land is 1100 acres of very fine peat soil. To combat this problem, floodgates and water control structures were installed. And drainage ditches were dug by the landowners.

The project also includes a recreation area on Cullaby Lake.



Final inspection by H. M. Olsvick, county engineer, Verne Stratton and Hiram Johnson, Clatsop County Commissioners, R. W. Liddell, SCS, James Scarborough, Clatsop County Commissioner, W. T. Larson, E. O. Gunderson, T. T. Fujii, SCS, Richard Hertz, contractor.

The open 8 x 10 foot barn-door type gate on the right barrel of this flood control structure in the Skipanon River Watershed Project permits migratory fish to reach upstream spawning grounds as well as providing flood protection to 1,900 acres of good farmland.









## WATERSHED RECREATION

The Cullaby Lake Recreation area was authorized as a part of the Skipanon River Watershed Project in December 1963 on a 50-50 cost-share basis between Clatsop County and the Soil Conservation Service.

The recreation area contains a paved parking lot, picnic tables, sandy beach, boat ramps, restrooms, and a boat basin. Future plans include provisions for trailer sites, camping facilities, and enlarged beach and picnic areas.

The area received the first indication of its recreation potential in August 1966 when the Annual Astoria Regatta was held on Cullaby Lake.

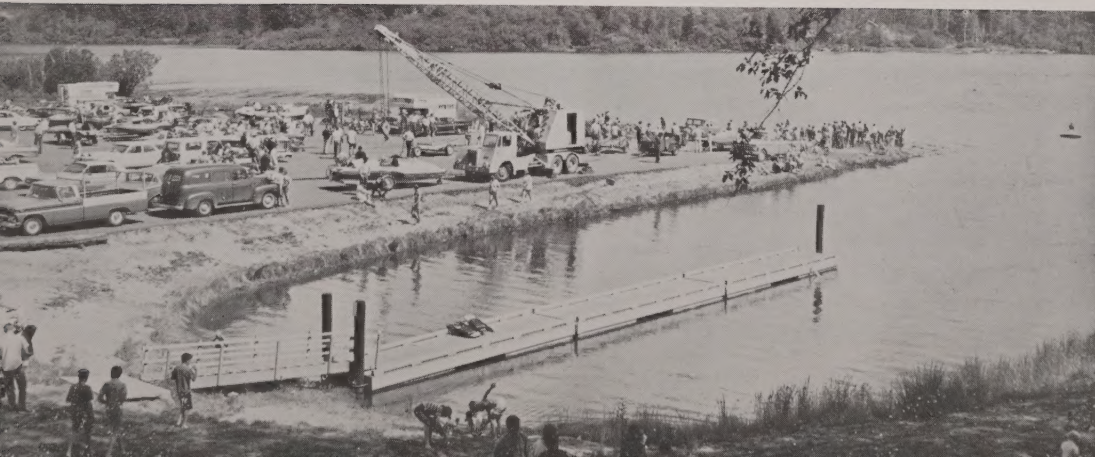


Boat basin site —  
Cullaby Lake



Recreation at Cullaby Lake today.

Completed mooring basin — Cullaby Lake.





## LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The Warrenton Dune Soil and Water Conservation District has come a long way since it was established in mid-1941. Much progress has been made in the attack on long-standing soil and water problems, but more work is needed to complete the job.

Throughout the district there is considerable need for additional tile and open ditches to wipe out excess water problems at individual farms and on groups of farms in different communities. The completion of the Skipanon River Watershed project, sponsored by the Warrenton Dune Soil and Water Conservation District, has provided landowners of that area protection from flooding and an outlet for improving drainage on their individual farms.

There is still a need for improvement of grass-land operations. Many acres remain in need of being seeded to improved mixtures, fertilized, and managed for increased production.

Recreation at the present time is big business and it is going to get bigger in the future. The county has recently completed a new park on Cullaby Lake with the assistance of the Skipanon

River Watershed project. Recently, 435 acres of County dune land was placed under the County Parks system and reserved for future recreation development.

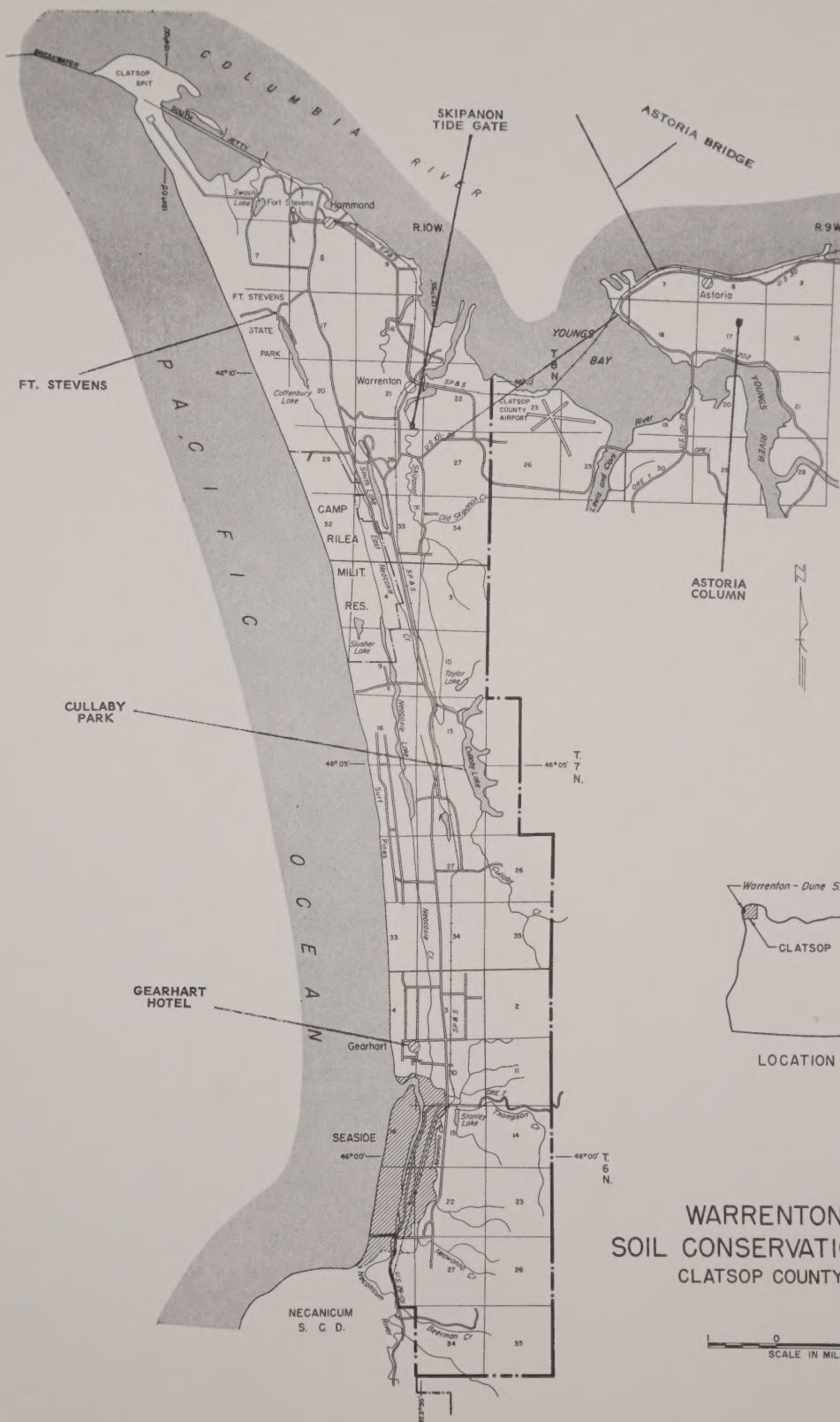
Ft. Stevens State Park, originally made possible with the dune stabilization project, is in the process of being enlarged from its present 750 acres to 3250 acres.

Many private developments are also in the planning and development stage.

The district supervisors and cooperators face the future with full confidence in their ability to develop a more stable and productive agriculture; develop more and better recreational facilities; and improve the economic strength of the area and all of its people. Throughout the history of the Warrenton Dune Soil and Water Conservation District, the organization has had wholehearted assistance of many local, county, state, federal and private organizations and individuals. It hopes to receive, and cordially invites, a continuance of this teamwork. If we continue to work together, we can get the whole job done quicker and more effectively.

Peter Plyter, Chairman  
John Dawson  
Ernest Luoma  
Art Peterson  
Kenneth Kunkler  
District Supervisors





# WARRENTON-DUNE SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT CLATSOP COUNTY, OREGON

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